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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 KATHMANDU 000673

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS AND DS/IP/NEA
STATE ALSO PLEASE PASS USAID/DCHA/OFDA
STATE ALSO PLEASE PASS PEACE CORPS HQ
USAID FOR ANE/AA GORDON WEST AND JIM BEVER
MANILA FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA
LONDON FOR POL/GURNEY
TREASURY FOR GENERAL COUNSEL/DAUFHAUSER AND DAS JZARATE
TREASURY ALSO FOR OFAC/RNEWCOMB AND TASK FORCE ON TERRORIST
FINANCING
JUSTICE FOR OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL/DLAUFMAN
NSC FOR MILLARD
SECDEF FOR OSD/ISA LILLENFELD

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON NEPAL'S MAOIST INSURGENCY, APRIL 3-9,
2004

REFERENCE: (A) KATHMANDU 0588

(B) KATHMANDU 0516

(C) KATHMANDU 0638

(D) KATHMANDU 0620

SUMMARY

1. A Maoist nighttime attack on a police post in the west left nine policemen dead and six injured. Five other security personnel and nineteen rebels were killed in separate clashes. The extradition of arrested Maoist senior politburo member Mohan Vaidya (Ref A) reportedly has been delayed indefinitely, pending his trial in India. The Government of India condemned attacks by Maoists this week against Indian nationals and vehicles as "blatant acts of terrorism." Maoists released 37 captives taken after the deadly attack in Myagdi District (Ref B). The five political parties continued their protests, while the Government of Nepal (GON) warned of possible Maoist infiltration of the protests. The Kathmandu Valley endured a one-day general closure (bandh) declared by the political parties on April 3 and a nationwide Maoist-declared 3-day bandh on April 6-8. Maoists reportedly murdered five civilians in separate incidents this week. Maoist bombs damaged buildings and an ambulance. Maoists continue to forcibly gather up thousands of villagers for participation in their programs. The recent spike in violence and protests has caused a decline in tourist arrivals. Maoist surrenders reportedly have surpassed 800 since the announcement of the GON's amnesty program. End Summary.

DEADLY ATTACKS ON POLICE POSTS

2. Maoists in Ilam District, which borders India on the east, attacked a police post on April 8 killing two policemen. Forty-one other security personnel reportedly were taken hostage by the rebels and remain missing. The local press reported that police on the Indian side said the Maoists launched the attack from Indian soil, and found large numbers of bullet casings nearby. Prior to the Maoist offensive, a female cadre, speaking on a loudspeaker in both Hindi and Nepali, allegedly warned people on the Indian side not to interfere or cross the border. On April 4, a nighttime attack on another police post in the southern district of Dhanusha left nine officers dead and six injured. Armed Maoists, which estimates numbered as high as 500 and as low as 30, stormed the post and were able to overrun it. Fifteen police remain unaccounted for. On that same day in the western district of Kavre, three Royal Nepal Army (RNA) soldiers were killed after their vehicle ran over a Maoist-planted landmine.

3. Nineteen Maoists reportedly were killed by security forces this week: seven in the districts of Doti, Bardiya and Kailali on April 5; seven in the districts of Dolakha and Dhangadi on April 4; three in Morang District on April 3; and two in Morang on April 2.

INDIA DELAYS EXTRADITION OF VAIDYA;
MAOISTS TARGET INDIAN NATIONALS

4. On April 8, the local press reported that Maoist senior politburo member Mohan Vaidya, also known as Kiran, who was arrested in India on March 30 (Ref A), was placed in judicial custody and charged with "waging war against India." Several days earlier, on April 3, the local press reported that officials with India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) would not immediately extradite Vaidya.

The recent developments suggest that Vaidya will likely be tried in Indian court for being involved in "anti-social work on Indian soil," and reportedly for establishing contact with Indian militant organizations. Vaidya is the highest-ranking Maoist to be arrested since the start of the so-called "Peoples' War." On April 2, Indian police reportedly also arrested a Maoist commander from Nepal's Rautahat District, which borders India on the south.

15. Maoists conducted several attacks against Indian commercial interests, allegedly in retaliation against the Indian government's arrest of Mohan Vaidya. On April 4, Maoists torched 18 tankers parked near the India-Nepal border in the far-western district of Kailali. The rebels reportedly forced the drivers of the vehicles out of the trucks at gunpoint, and subsequently torched the tankers one by one. The trucks had Indian license plates, though they purportedly are owned by Nepalese businessmen. In a separate incident on that same day, Maoists reportedly fired on a group of three Indian nationals and set their truck on fire in Bhairahawa after the men resisted rebel extortion demands. A note left at the scene reportedly said the rebels were avenging Vaidya's arrest and warned that Indian financed institutions would be the "next targets." On April 6, the local press reported that Maoists in the far-western district of Bardia, which borders India on the south, forced over 20 Indian businessmen to leave the district and issued warnings to 40 others.

16. India's Ministry of External Affairs issued a press statement on April 5 condemning the attacks against Indian nationals in Nepal as "blatant acts of terrorism," and called for the apprehension and punishment of the responsible individuals. The statement also said that the Government of India holds Maoist leaders responsible, and demanded full security from the Government of Nepal (GON). In response, the GON said its security agencies had been alerted to "reinforce security measures."

MAOISTS RELEASE CAPTIVES

17. On April 6, Maoists released 37 hostages (Ref C), including the Chief District officer (CDO), the highest ranking civil servant, and the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), the highest-ranking police officer, held for sixteen days after the massed attack by the rebels in Myagdi District (Ref B). The captives were turned over to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in the far western district of Rolpa, and later brought to Kathmandu. Six policemen remain unaccounted for.

PARTY PROTESTS CONTINUE; GON WARNS OF MAOIST INFILTRATION

18. Nepal's five principal political parties have staged daily demonstrations since the April 1 protest against "regression." (Ref D). While the demonstrations remained largely peaceful, a particularly violent day on April 2 resulted in the parties declaring a valley closure on April 13. Businesses were shut down and most public and private vehicles stayed off the roads.

19. On April 4, the Home Ministry issued a statement urging the political parties, civil society, and the media to cooperate with the government in maintaining peace and to refrain from violence. The Home Ministry voiced concern over the "extreme and objectionable" chanting against the monarchy and the constitution. The GON warned against infiltration of the protests by Maoists, and pointed to the violence, arson, and vandalism being perpetrated by the demonstrators as evidence of the terror the rebels would bring if the parties welcomed their participation. Representatives of the political parties, speaking to reporters, said they would never join the "murderous and violent" activities of the Maoists. Despite this, Maoist supremo Prachanda, through a press statement issued on April 2, voiced his support for the political parties' protests.

THREE-DAY BANDH CLOSES KATHMANDU

10. A Maoist-called three-day nationwide shut-down (bandh) during April 6-8 closed schools, shops and transportation, but remained generally peaceful. There were a few incidents, including two bomb blasts in the Valley on April 7 and another bomb in neighboring Bhaktapur District on April 8. As is typical of the rebels, in the days leading up to the bandh, several bombs were exploded to force the general population to observe the bandh: two near the Election Commission headquarters and one in Chitwan District on April 3; two at a government building in Kathmandu District on April 5; two in the Valley on April 5; and one at the District Education Office in Dhading District on April 3, which killed one civilian and injured two others.

MAOIST VIOLENCE CLAIMS CIVILIAN LIVES

11. Maoists reportedly murdered five civilians in separate incidents this week. A Deputy Secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) was killed in the far-western district of Bajura on April 8; another civilian was shot dead in Nawalparasi District on April 5; one in Jhapa District on April 6; a government employee was shot dead in Baglung District; and a 65 year-old man was abducted and killed in Rautahat District on April 2.

12. On April 8, in Dang District, a Maoist stronghold in the west, a group of rebels attacked an ambulance owned by the Red Cross. The vehicle was hit by socket bombs and sustained damage to the windshield. On April 3, Maoists bombed the ancestral home of Home Minister Kamal Thapa in Makwanpur District, injuring two police guarding the house, and causing slight damage to the structure.

MAOIST ROUND UPS CONTINUE

13. Maoists continue to forcibly conscript thousands of villagers for participation in their programs. On April 7, 1500 youths reportedly were taken from schools in the far-western district of Kanchanpur. According to security officials, they were taken by rebels who want to "re-educate them." The majority of the youths were released the following day after attending an indoctrination program. A district secretary with the CPN-UML said 3,000 villagers fled to India and neighboring districts after the mass round up, and criticized the government for failing to protect villagers. On April 6, 31 youths from Panchthar District in the east also were taken and released the following day after attending Maoist programs. On April 3, 60 teachers in the far-western district of Dadeldhura were taken by the Maoists to attend a "Teachers' Meet program." They have not been released. On April 8, villagers in Kanchanpar District, reportedly killed seven Maoists. Eyewitnesses said the villagers were "angered by the Maoists," who had forced them to participate in a political program. The villagers reportedly returned the next day to the program venue and beat the rebels to death.

MAOISTS AFTER AUTOCRATIC RULE?

14. On April 4, the local press reported that a videotape seized by the RNA at the scene of the massed attack in Myagdi District (Ref B) shows Maoist commanders pledging to "cripple the coalition" and prevent elections in order to secure power for themselves. The commanders allege that the "reactionary forces," including the parliamentary parties, have formed a conspiracy to form an all-party government, and therefore the rebels must "obstruct the polls," the main objective of the attack in Myagdi District.

TOURISM INDUSTRY TAKES A HIT

15. The spike in violence and frequent "bandhs" have forced tourists to cancel trips to Nepal. According to Tek Bahadur Dangi, Chief Executive Officer of Nepal Tourism Board, cancellations are "on a constant rise," because of the political unrest. Dangi said the rate of tourist arrivals had shown some improvements, but the events of the past several weeks had once again caused the numbers to decline. Narendra Bajarcharya, president of Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN), said the recent strikes and protests have also caused tourists to shorten their stays, leaving with "a negative image of Nepal."

MAOISTS SURRENDERS SURPASS 800

16. On April 2, the Home Ministry said the total number of surrendered Maoists had now reached 852 from 66 different districts since the announcement of the GON's amnesty program.

MALINOWSKI